

8 December 2010

Mr T Evans
Standards Committee Chair
West Somerset Council
West Somerset House
Killick Way
Williton
Somerset TA4 4QA

Our Ref: 35491/10
Your Ref: BL/ejd

Dear Mr Evans,

Standards Committees

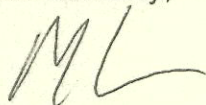
Thank you for your letter of 13 October to the Department about the local authority standards regime in a post-Standards Board world. I am responding to your letter as I work in the team that deals with policy surrounding the conduct of councillors. I am sorry for the delay in replying.

Our proposals for the abolition of the Standards Board regime are intended to remove a top-down, centrally imposed standards regime. We consider that it is wrong to impose a model code of conduct and to require local authorities to maintain standards committees.

It would, once the Standards Board regime has been abolished, be entirely consistent with the principles of localism if an authority were to adopt a voluntary code of conduct and establish a voluntary standards committee. I should be clear that Government would not mandate what would be in any voluntary code of conduct, nor would we give any voluntary standards committee powers of sanction.

In regards to the proposals the Department is bringing forward, these will be published in full when the Localism Bill is laid before Parliament and can also now be seen on our website at
www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/standardsboard

Yours faithfully,



Mark Coram